



## **Mass Ave/Appleton Design Review Committee**

Date: Thursday, July 8, 2021

Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation

Members In attendance: Kim Cayer, Jeff Maxtutis, Phil Goff, Anne DiNoto, Christopher Tonkin, Daniel Amstutz (DPCD), Mike Rademacher (DPW), Wayne Chouinard (DPW), Captain Sean Kiernan (APD), Linda Epstein, S. Nicholas Kriketos, Abbi Holt.

Others in Attendance: Alison Piasecki, Petru Sofio (MassBike), Thomas Proctor, Judith Proctor, Sandra Voss, Jayson Gauvin (Green International), Wing Wong (Green International), Leah Grodstein, Joe Solomon, Olivia Mobayed (MBTA), Mary Tremblay, Jane Foley, Tim Lawrence, Kelly Lynema (DPCD), Carol McDonald, Lenard Diggins, Brian Ristuccia, Kelvin Lam, , Melinda Fallon, Leonard Greenberg, Amy Chelariu, Kaitlin Burnett, Nick Ferzacca, Stacey Dybel, Jennifer Litowski, Eric Ammondson, Ali Carter (DPCD), Christopher Friend, James Byers, Emma Rose, Joy Ahearn, Noga Hirsch.

### **Minutes. [DRAFT]**

#### **1. Welcome and Opening of Remote Meeting, including Ground Rules.**

Daniel Amstutz explained that the Committee has shown a preference for holding a virtual meeting even though in-person meetings inside are now possible. He noted the procedures that the Committee would follow to hold a virtual meeting. Governor Baker signed into law a bill which extends his Executive Order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic allowing virtual meetings, which suspended the usual Open Meeting Law requirement that a quorum of committee members be physically present in order to hold an official committee meeting. Amstutz confirmed the committee members in attendance for the meeting.

Amstutz went over the agenda and explained how committee and public comments would be handled, and noted there would be a separate public comment period at this meeting. He noted several items that had been posted on the calendar page on the Town's website.

#### **2. Approval of Minutes of May 27, 2021.**

Amstutz explained he did not have the minutes from May available at this time.

### 3. Public Comment Period.

Amstutz noted that his colleague Kelly Lynema would facilitate the public comment period.

Eric Ammondson noted he is an Arlington resident who lives near the intersection. He noted his concern about the intersection and said he worked with Charlie Proctor.

Petru Sofio said he had already sent in written comments and was speaking in favor of Short-Term Option 2: Bike Lanes. He also noted he is representing MassBike at this meeting. As this is a bike safety project, the improvements to this intersection should include bike lanes and safety features as provided by Option 2.

Kaitlin Burnett said she was a coworker of Charlie Proctor and urged the need to address safety at the Mass Ave/Appleton intersection as soon as possible. She supports Option 2.

S. Nicholas Kriketos said the safety of all modes of transportation should be prioritized and the concerns of nearby businesses and abutters should be heard.

Tim Lawrence noted he worked with Charlie Proctor at Architectural Engineers, Inc., and recently submitted a letter to the Committee signed by all the employees of the company supporting Option 2 with the bike lanes. He made some additional personal comments, noting that the purpose of the Committee is to improve safety at this intersection because someone was killed, and noted that the Boston MPO produced a report in 2012 that made safety recommendations. The project should prioritize cyclist safety, which is provided for in Option 2. He also asked that more be done to improve Mass Ave and Lowell Street for cyclist safety.

Leonard Greenberg explained that he had been severely injured at the Mass Ave/Appleton intersection on June 14, 2020, and is still recovering from his injuries. He urged the Committee to make a decision on making the intersection safe for all users. He noted that it has had a huge impact on his life.

Jennifer Litowski noted she is an Arlington resident and had a son attend Ottoson Middle School. She never encouraged her son to bike to school because of safety concerns. She said Option 1 would not offer the necessary safety for bicyclists, especially children, and urged the Committee to recommend Option 2.

Nick Ferzacca said he also worked with Charlie Proctor and supported previous comments in support of Option 2.

Melinda Fallon said she was from a local business (Mill Brook Animal Clinic) who

would be impacted by the changes to the intersection, and noted her support for improving the safety of the intersection. However, she is opposed to any loss of on-street parking and noted they depend on the on-street parking for people to access their business. They have been doing curbside service during COVID-19 which uses the parking directly outside their business. She asked about how the local businesses have been represented on the Committee. Amstutz noted that Kim Cayer from the Children's Room is the business representative on the Committee.

Christopher Friend commented in favor of Option 2 and urged the Committee to recommend this option.

Carol McDonald said she lives at 1192-1194 Mass Ave and is a long time Arlington resident. She noted she knew someone from high school who was killed at the intersection. She said cyclists need to slow down coming down the hill. A full traffic signal is what is needed. Option 2 has too many impacts on abutters and businesses and may encourage cyclists to speed through the intersection.

Kelvin Lam noted he lives at 1188 Mass Ave. His wife is a small business owner in Arlington. Speed of traffic on Mass Ave and by all users is a significant problem. He argued that Option 2 could create more traffic crashes because it will encourage drivers and cyclists to speed more. He said a mixing zone or shared lanes would be safer and slow down the traffic on Mass Ave. He said the impact to businesses from loss of on-street parking is too great. Option 1 is the better choice for slowing down traffic and helping businesses stay afloat.

Leah Grodstein commented that the speed of cars is much more of a concern than cyclists speeding because cars cause much greater damage due to their mass.

4. Updates: Written Public Comments received, Public Outreach, and Follow-Up from Last Meeting.

Amstutz noted the goal for the meeting is to review updated design concepts and information from Green International, and ideally to come to a consensus on which design concept to carry forward as a recommendation to Select Board with modifications as necessary.

Amstutz noted he received 13 public comments between the last meeting on May 27 and now (July 8). He summarized the themes of the comments:

- a. Continued concern of traffic safety at the Mass Ave/Appleton intersection and need for action;

- b. Opposition from several abutters and adjacent businesses to proposed Mass Ave parking restrictions, especially between Appleton Place and Burton Street;
- c. Protect cyclists along the corridor and through the intersection;
- d. Advocacy for Option 2 of the new concepts; and
- e. Technical suggestions (signage, further study, pavement markings).

Amstutz also noted activities that occurred since the last meeting. He met with Green International to discuss the previous meeting, public comments, and how to proceed with next steps for the concept designs.

In addition, Town staff attended a community meeting yesterday (July 7) with abutters and business owners to discuss their concerns. They shared their concerns about the safety of the intersection and the impacts of potential parking restrictions. Town staff shared the latest updated concept with the group as well to get their feedback. Amstutz presented his notes on what was expressed at the meeting:

- Businesses and residents concerned about parking loss
- Option 1 is preferred over Option 2
- Need to slow down all traffic
- General agreement on Appleton Place one-way away from Mass Ave
- Warning for cars and cyclists of downhill going eastbound
- See if there is space to pass cars waiting to turn left westbound
- There needs to be a full traffic signal installed here ASAP

Amstutz noted there was another recent crash involving a bicycle user at the Mass Ave/Appleton intersection. His understanding is that the cyclist was going eastbound very quickly and had to slow down to avoid being struck by a left-turning vehicle and fell off their bike, sustaining injury. He highlighted this in the discussion of speeds on Mass Ave.

Amstutz explained the process and considerations for developing the new, updated designs. The main considerations included:

1. Strong concerns about both parking loss for abutters/businesses and for improving cyclist safety
2. Left turn lane brings in complications and impacts space available for parking/bike lanes
3. Keep short-term elements to pavement markings, signage, and temporary materials (flex posts) that could be implemented this year
4. Focus on reducing vehicle speeds during left turning movements and in general through the Mass Ave/Appleton intersection
5. Improvements may not be perfect but are better than leaving things as they are

He then went over the process for getting improvements implemented. The Committee must make a recommendation to the Select Board, which ultimately approves the changes. After that, Town departments must implement the improvements as soon as they can.

The next times the Board meets are on July 19, August 9, and September 13. If the Committee thinks additional public engagement is needed, this will push back the ability to get a recommendation to the Board at one of their upcoming meetings. It is feasible to have a recommendation by the August 9 Board meeting and waiting until the Board meeting in September limits the available time to implement improvements this year. Most road construction activities end in mid-November due to inclement weather and decreasing temperatures.

5. Review Updated Concepts from Green International and Come to Consensus on Final Short-Term Design for the Area.

Amstutz noted there were two updated concepts to look at this evening, Short-Term Option 1: Shared Lanes and Short-Term Option 2: Bike Lanes. Green International also provided a list of pros and cons for the options and analysis of parking impacts from the proposed short-term concepts, like the last meeting.

Amstutz discussed Short-term Option 1. This option is very similar to Option 2, the main difference being that it keeps the bike accommodations as shared lanes and limits parking impacts. It includes the curb extension on the south side of the intersection, green-backed shared-lane markings (sharrows), a rapid flashing beacon at Forest and Burton Streets, makes Appleton Place one-way away from Mass Ave, relocates the westbound bus stop west of the crosswalk, restricts left turns from Appleton Street to Mass Ave, includes speed feedback signs on Mass Ave, flexible delineators at the curb extension and in the double yellow centerline on Mass Ave to reduce speed and define turning movement space, some parking impacts to improve visibility and safety, updated signage, and tree trimming around the eastbound MBTA bus stop. One of the main goals of both options are to reduce the parking impacts to the north side Mass Ave by the businesses. He also went over the pros and cons of this Option. (See Table 1)

*Table 1*

<b>Short-Term Option 1: Shared Lanes</b>	
<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Places bikes in center of eastbound travel lane in more visible location for westbound left-turns	No on-road space designated for bicyclists
Maintains majority of on-street parking on Mass Ave	Minor impacts to Mass Ave on-street parking supply
Tree trimming and on-street parking restrictions on southwest corner of Mass	Solar glare still limits visibility of eastbound through vehicles and bicyclists

Ave/Appleton Street increases visibility	for westbound left-turns
Relocates westbound MBTA bus stop to far side of intersection, increasing visibility at pedestrian crossings at Appleton Place	
Slower vehicle speeds for Mass Ave westbound left-turns	
Tighter intersection, more defined turning movements	
Pedestrian crossing improvements at Forest Street	
Reduces vehicle speeds on Mass Ave approaching the intersection	

Amstutz discussed Short-Term Option 2. The main difference between this option and Option 1 is the provision of bike lanes for cyclist safety. All the items in the previous option are included here, with some variations. For example, the green pavement markings are placed in bike lane locations where there is the highest potential for bike-car conflicts. Unfortunately, the road is not wide enough for bike lanes on both sides and on-street parking on both sides. He noted the pros and cons from this as well. (See Table 2)

Table 2

Short-Term Option 2: Bike Lanes	
Pros	Cons
Separates vehicles and bikes on Mass Ave	Significant impacts to Mass Ave on-street parking supply
Partially fills existing gap in bike lanes on Mass Ave	Solar glare still limits visibility of eastbound through vehicles and bicyclists for westbound left-turns
Tree trimming and on-street parking restrictions on southwest corner of Mass Ave/Appleton Street increases visibility	
High visibility eastbound bike crossing	
Relocates westbound MBTA bus stop to far side of intersection, increasing visibility at pedestrian crossings at Appleton Place	
Slower vehicle speeds for Mass Ave westbound left-turns	
Tighter intersection, more defined turning movements	
Pedestrian crossing improvements at Forest Street	
Reduces vehicle speeds on Mass Ave	

approaching the intersection	
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Amstutz passed the meeting to Kelly Lynema, Senior Planner with the Department of Planning and Community Development, to facilitate the discussion with the Committee members and public. Lynema noted the discussion will start between Committee members, and if there is time, they will take more feedback and questions from the public.

Wayne Chouinard said he was concerned about the lack of the dedicated left turn lane in the design, its impacts on safety and traffic congestion, and asked for more information as to the process to get to these updated concepts. He also noted the need for a curb extension at the crosswalk and raised concerns about relocating the bus stop. Jayson explained that the removal of the left turn lane was based on the feedback and comments from the last Committee meeting, and a need to limit on-street parking impacts. He also noted the goal of the design is to improve bicyclist safety and slow vehicle speeds. They are not changing the ability of drivers to go around other drivers waiting to turn left. The double yellow centerline will not be moved. He also noted there are challenges to doing curb extensions at Lowell Street because of needed driveway access and existing on-street parking. Amstutz added that the Committee has focused on the Mass Ave/Appleton intersection and the other parts of the corridor will be looked at later. He noted the goal of the concept is to improve safety, not necessarily to reduce traffic congestion.

Jeff Maxtutis thanked Green International for their work. He asked if the pedestrian signal would remain for both options, and if there would be any improvements to the signal to increase its visibility. Gauvin said the signals would be kept as they are currently. Relocating signals would involve more road work than what is intended. Maxtutis asked about the considerations for on-street parking restrictions. Gauvin noted they tried to minimize impacts to higher-demand on-street parking locations.

Phil Goff thanked the Town and Green International for their work. He said Option 2 is a great option and balances a lot of the competing needs of the corridor. He noted the left turn lane could be considered in a long-term project. He said it was important to retain parking in front of the businesses, but noted the street is a public right of way and parking on both sides is not always a right. For the sake of safety, the continuous bike lane is needed. He made three suggestions for the concept: 1) a striped bump-out could work at Lowell Street with access provided to driveways as needed; 2) the bike lane could be shifted at the intersection to allow drivers to pass on the right and not encroach on the bike lane; and 3) the delineators in the centerline should be more robust that will survive for a while.

S. Nicholas Kriketos asked for clarification about the left turn restrictions. Gauvin explained the sign showing the left turn restriction is for traffic coming down Appleton Street towards Mass Ave, restricting left turns to Mass Ave. Kriketos reiterated his opposition to removing any parking on Mass Ave and noted several businesses on the north side of Mass Ave and the upcoming hotel project at Mass Ave and Clark Street. He also asked for clarification about the existing bike facilities in the area. He said that he thought Option 1 was preferable as the shared lanes would help slow down cyclists. He also noted his concern that DPW was not more involved in the development of the updated concepts.

Linda Epstein said the improvements to visibility at the west side of the intersection are welcome. She asked about the new location of the stop sign coming down Appleton Street. She noted her concern about parking and asked if parking could be restricted at some times of the day but not all day. Her main concern about the eastbound bike lane is that drivers will still park in the bike lane east of the intersection. Enforcement of the no parking will be necessary. She asked for clarification about the location of the speed feedback sign. Gauvin said they are proposing solar-powered signs, so access to good sunlight played into the location decision. There are also space limitations in the corridor. Amstutz explained the idea is to have the speed signs before Forest/Burton Streets and Lowell Street to slow vehicles as they enter the corridor. For the stop sign, the challenge is that the stop sign needs to be at the stop bar, which is not planned to move. Epstein said drivers were likely to stop in the crosswalk there.

Kim Cayer asked if there is an opportunity to add parking along Forest Street. She also asked if the timing on the pedestrian signal could be adjusted to give more time for drivers to slow down. She also expressed concern that DPW was not more involved in the concept update. She said making a decision sooner rather than later is important to improve the intersection. Gauvin said they could work with DPW to see if the timings meet current standards.

Anne DiNoto said she supports Option 2 as a resident in the neighborhood. She also said a before and after study should be done to understand the impacts of the various improvements.

Mike Rademacher asked if the lane widths between the options are the same. Gauvin noted Option 1 leaves the lanes the same width while Option 2 reduces the lane widths to accommodate the bike lane. Rademacher raised a concern about drivers encroaching into the bike lane in Option 2 when passing drivers trying to turn left. He also asked if these options envision keeping the turn restriction from Mass Ave to Appleton Street during periods of high solar glare. Captain Kiernan said the police department's intent is to continue the left turn lane prohibition until a final resolution is developed. They have also been out at the intersection to try and slow traffic as well. Rademacher noted that both options improve things but until a traffic signal is installed the left turn restriction may need to be continued.



Abbi Holt said she supports Option 2 given her cycling experience and concern for students biking to school.

Epstein asked if parts of the options could be implemented now while more challenging parts could be dealt with over time, so that something could be done as soon as possible. Amstutz said he was not opposed to that but the Committee would need to be specific about what changes they would be recommending to the Board. He also noted the Town would need to find funding to continue to retain Green International for additional iterations of concepts.

Goff made a motion for the Committee to recommend Short-Term Option 2: Bike Lanes to the Select Board for approval, provided that DPW can review the plan and make tweaks if necessary. Holt seconded Goff's motion.

Kriketos noted that other solar-powered signs may be applicable here, and referenced signs used in Somerville near Tufts University. He suggested looking into the stop signs with LEDs around the edges for the stop sign at the bottom of Appleton Street at Mass Ave. He also suggested having a sign noting "Dangerous Curve" at the difficult curves at Forest Street.

Rademacher asked if the motion could be tweaked to allow for DPW to have a couple of weeks to review the plans and potentially make changes that would be brought back to the Committee. He was concerned they would need to come back to the Committee for their approval for any changes. Goff said he would be open to that, if the changes were so great that the Committee would need to review it. Amstutz said it may be best to vote on the Committee's preference and show the Board both options if necessary, noting what the Committee has recommended. Maxtutis suggested that monitoring of the improvements should be done after they are installed. Kriketos noted his concern about tweaks being made to the recommended plan without coming back to the Committee. Amstutz said they would work with DPW to determine what changes might be needed and how extensive they would be.

Goff clarified and amended his motion to recommend Option 2 to the Select Board and give DPW the opportunity to meet with Green International to make tweaks if necessary and have this be the only option reviewed and tweaked. Holt seconded the revised motion.

Amstutz read the roll call for the vote. Committee members supporting the motion were:

- Kim Cayer
- Jeff Maxtutis
- Phil Goff
- Christopher Tonkin
- Linda Epstein

- Daniel Amstutz
- Abbi Holt
- Anne DiNoto [Ed: DiNoto was counted as in favor of Option 2 based on her remarks earlier in the meeting, although by the time of the vote she had left the meeting.]

Committee members opposed to the motion were:

- Mike Rademacher (DPW)
- Captain Sean Kiernan (DPW)
- S. Nicholas Kriketos

The motion passed, 8-3.

6. Discuss Next Steps and Set Next Committee Meeting Dates.

Amstutz summarized the next steps: DPW will meet with Green International to discuss Option 2, with the intention of bringing this recommendation to the Board as soon as possible. The Board will have to approve this option and people can reach out to the Board to support their preference.

7. Adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 pm.



## **Mass Ave/Appleton Design Review Committee**

Date: Thursday, July 8, 2021

Time: 7:00 PM – 8:42 PM

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation

### **Chat Recording**

00:13:25 melinda fallon: Please explain where the raise hand feature is located

00:14:08 Phil Goff: go to Reactions at bottom right

00:14:09 Kim Cayer: On the bottom of the screen under "reactions"

00:14:31 melinda fallon: Thanks

00:27:44 Leah Grodstein: Respectfully, it seems insensitive at best to blame cyclists for their own deaths

00:58:03 Tim Lawrence: Thank you for the reasoning on Lowell St. Jayson. I was the one asked about it in the comment period. Understand you have short-term priorities.

00:59:26 Petru Sofio (he/him): Based on what we saw at the curb extension testing, signals must be moved or else drivers will run the red, especially coming down Appleton st. Also, changing the parking sides has the benefit of creating chicanes that slow traffic for everyone!

01:12:57 Jennifer Litowski: My experience on other parts of Mass Ave is that sharrows don't slow down traffic, they just squeeze people riding bikes into an unsafe space.

01:14:49 Joy Ahearn: Have you considered not allowing any left turns off of Mass Ave onto Appleton or Appleton Place?

01:15:47 Joseph Solomon: That's actually enforced sporadically today during PM hours but for some reason is absent in these versions.

- 01:16:04 Phil Goff: I ride bike lanes in E Arlington constantly and parking in the bike lane is VERY rare.
- 01:19:39 CAROL MCDONALD: So how will parents pick up their children if you take away left turn on Appleton Street? Your going to cause traffic jams up at Duncan Donuts
- 01:21:19 Joseph Solomon: If it's restricted to evening hours (as it is today) it doesn't conflict with the Ottoson pickup times
- 01:23:07 Petru Sofio (he/him): I've seen some signals start flashing more rapidly when a button is clicked and then turn yellow. Could that be added? Probably not with existing equipment but possibly.
- 01:24:12 Petru Sofio (he/him): Clearance is non complaint I have checked. FDW should be 14 seconds (3.5 feet per second), and is currently 11 (4 feet per second).
- 01:24:53 Joy Ahearn: I see what you mean, Carol. The Ottoson is so tucked away into this residential area, it does create issues all around!
- 01:25:20 Amy Chelariu: Potentially encourage parents to turn left before Appleton street to get to Acton street in a safer way
- 01:26:28 CAROL MCDONALD: Can't be done
- 01:30:34 Jennifer Litowski: If the timing of the restriction on left turns from Mass Ave changes during the year, doesn't that cause more confusion? People won't know if they can turn or not. Or is this only until a signal is installed?
- 01:30:48 Joy Ahearn: If you made Acton Street a two-way street, it could be done. Parents could turn up Quincy or Fessenden (it would be nice if Fessenden got paved), then right onto Appleton Place, then left up Acton for pickup
- 01:33:28 CAROL MCDONALD: Not going to work
- 01:33:40 CAROL MCDONALD: Street are too narrow.
- 01:37:31 Abbi Holt: I would support that kind of sign too
- 01:38:07 Petru Sofio (he/him): I think we need to be concerned about sign clutter, but if it's that far up it shouldn't be a concern.
- 01:41:14 Abbi Holt: I'm definitely still for taking a vote.

- 01:41:17 Petru Sofio (he/him): Maybe more like selected option 2 keeping the bike lanes. And then talk about minor changes. But keeping the lanes as is?
- 01:41:39 Petru Sofio (he/him): But making minor signage changes and physical changes.
- 01:43:13 Linda Epstein: I agree with Jeff
- 01:48:19 Petru Sofio (he/him): As for Anne's vote, should we assume she is voting yes as she said she has a preference. Or do you want to contact her for her vote
- 01:51:41 melinda fallon: Any public comment allowed???
- 01:51:52 Abbi Holt: Thank you Dan and town staff!